

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1628

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, US

SUBJECT: U.S. JOURNALIST TRAVEL TO PRC

1. AT SEPTEMBER 19 CHIAO KUAN-HUA BANQUET FOR MR. BRUCE USLO OFFICERS ASKED MFA INFORMATION DEPARTMENT'S MFA YU-CHEN IF THE PRC WOULD ADMIT SOME AMERICAN JOURNALISTS FROM HONGKONG TO CHINA TO COVER THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS. MA REPLIED THAT HIS UNIT WAS SWAMPED WITH VISITORS AT PRESENT AND FOR THIS REASON HONG KONG BASED AMERICAN PRESS COULD NOT BE ADMITTED. WHEN THE SUBJECT WAS RAISED AGAIN LATER IN THE EVENING, MA SAID HE PLANNED TO INVITE SOME AMERICAN HONG KONG JOURNALISTS TO VISIT CHINA LATER THIS YEAR AFTER THE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS.

2. MA ALSO SAID HE BELIEVED THAT AMERICAN PRESS REPORTING ON CHINA HAS BEEN "FAIR" (I.E. BALANCED) AND THAT HE HAD PASSED THIS ASSESSMENT ALONG TO OTHER PRC OFFICIALS. HE COMMENTED THAT A FEW "WILD STORIES" WERE TO BE EXPECTED BUT THAT THEY WERE NOT OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE.

3. ON SEPTEMBER 20 MA'S STATEMENTS WERE PARTIALLY CONFIRMED WHEN NEW ZEALAND AMBASSADOR HARLAND TOLD DC HOLDRIDGE THAT NEW ZEALAND HONG KONG CORRESPONDENT ROUND HAS ALREADY RECEIVED INVITATION TO VISIT CHINA WITH A GROUP OF JOURNALISTS IN LATE OCTOBER. ACCORDING TO ROUND, ITINERARY WILL NOT RPT NOT INCLUDE
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PEKING, BUT HARLAND HAD NO FURTHER DETAILS. ROUND

REPORTEDLY BELIEVES THAT SOME AMERICAN JOURNALISTS BASED IN HONG KONG WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE TRIP.

4. COMMENT: OUR GUESS IS THAT INVITATIONS TO JOURNALISTS WILL BE ON THE ORDER OF THE TOURS ARRANGED BY CHINESE FOR HONG KONG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND BANKERS. IF ROUND HAS HIS INVITATION, WORD OF POSSIBLE VISIT PROBABLY HAS ALREADY SPREAD IN HONG KONG PRESS CORPS. NEVERTHELESS, WE FEEL THAT OUR CONVERSATION WITH MA SHOULD BE CLOSELY HELD. WE VERY MUCH WANT TO AVOID AMERICAN JOURNALISTS CONTACTING MA DIRECTLY CITING A USLO APPROACH TO HIM, OR WORSE, A NEWS STORY ON PRC WILLINGNESS TO ADMIT JOURNALISTS MENTIONING MA'S STATEMENTS TO US. MCCALL HAS MORE DETAILS ON USLO APPROACH TO THIS MATTER AND CAN DISCUSS WHEN HE RETURNS TO HONG KONG TUESDAY.
BRUCE

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